

Mayfield Cove by **Michael_hearteyes_Wheeler**

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Summary:

Lucas Sinclair wanted to take up surfing, and what he thought was a small and secluded cove to practice in, ended up holding a secret that would change his life forever.

Mayfield Cove

Author's Note:

Hello everyone! This is just a cute and fluffy Mermaid!Max AU in honor of Mermay. Hope you enjoy!

It started with sea shells.

All soft creamy oranges, and dusty pinks. Swirling snail shells, and silver rimmed mollusks. Every now and then, a brilliant green piece of sea glass would sit at the top of the pile, like the crowning jewel on some king's crown. Just little, almost inconspicuous piles of sea shells, littered on the edge of an old forgotten dock. If you weren't paying attention, you probably wouldn't even notice them.

But Lucas Sinclair wasn't the type of person to let such things go unnoticed. Every day that he went down to that old dock, in the secluded cove, and sat on the water's edge watching the swells, he would look over the day's newest collection. Never the same twice, always beautiful, always perfect. Surely it just meant that someone else found this cove as magical as he did, someone else who came everyday. Only he never saw another person here. He always showed up to find the beach empty, and he always left without seeing another face.

It had been almost a miracle, finding this beach in the first place. He knew from the moment that he and his friends were moving to a small town in southern California, that he wanted to take up surfing. The only problem with that was that living in landlocked Indiana meant he had never been on a surfboard or even seen the ocean. He knew he would probably fall off or get swept away in the undertow a thousand times before he was any good at it, so for months he never

bothered.

He drove past long stretches of beach on the pacific highway that took him too and from work. He mused at the brilliant sunrises far off in the east hills, and the breathtaking sunsets glimmering on the water. He watched other surfers with an almost melancholic jealousy, but never visited the beach for more than a few minutes. Other than the time Dustin wanted to build a real sand castle, of course, forget the fact they were all in their early twenties.

Then, one day in May, when he was feeling particularly stir-crazy, and the last thing he wanted was to go back home to his cramped apartment he shared with three others, he went to a surf shop, and bought a board. He had done his research, as he always did, and found the exact kind he wanted. It had a stylish fin and was just as orange as the sunsets he loved so much. Then he went driving, coming up and down the highway, looking for secluded places to practice and enjoy the ocean.

And that's when he found the cove. 'Mayfield' cove, as the badly sun bleached sign read. It was just a short trip down a seldom used road from the main highway, and its little winding path looked almost forgotten. It had a tiny old fishing dock, that was swollen and warped from age, and its sand was unmarred by footprints of any kind.

Lucas practically let out a gasp when he found it. Every inch of beach up the west coast was typically crawling with people, families, dogs, and surfers, but not Mayfield cove. There was probably a reason why, some logical part of him called as he made his way across the sand, but none came to mind. It seemed perfect. Its gentle swells were just the right size for a beginner, and it wouldn't take much to paddle out to the bigger ones beyond its rocky shores when he was a bit more experienced. The water that filtered in was warm and clear, and more

importantly than anything else; he had it all to himself.

He started stopping by everyday after work, and stayed until the sun set behind him. It was a refuge. He started out pretty terrible at anything involving the actual water. The waves knocked him over, his board flipped him off, his ankle tether made him trip, but he got better with time. Once summer was in full swing, he was actually kind of good (at least he thought anyway).

He fell in love with that cove, and with its waters. He learned to become one with the waves, and it wasn't long before he could stay out all day and only fall once or twice. Even falling was fun, because in those moments, in the crystal clear water, he felt like some sort of fish swimming through the coral and seaweed.

It was also around this time that he began noticing the sea shells. Always piled up the edge of that old forgotten dock. At first he thought maybe they had always been there, and he had been too preoccupied to notice. Then when he took the pile home to give to his artsy roommate Will, and found a new pile the next day, he knew there was something else going on. Everyday, a new assortment, new shells, carefully placed in the same spot, but no other people, and never any footsteps. It kind of made him feel like he was going crazy, and his friends didn't really help.

"It's probably just a fisherman in a boat, and that's why there aren't any footprints." Dustin had suggested when Lucas opened up about the ordeal.

"Why would a fishermen come and leave a bunch of shells on some old dock?" Lucas retorted, spinning a piece of sea glass in his fingers.

“Who knows, people do weird shit sometimes.” Dustin shrugged and tossed a piece of candy into his mouth.

“Maybe its a night jogger, and the tide washes the prints away.” Mike, being ever the reasonableist, commented from across their small living room.

Lucas nodded weakly, because that's what he wanted to believe. It made the most sense, but something about it still felt off. There was some other strange explanation, he could feel it. And it drove him crazy to think he may never know.

“Maybe it's a mermaid.” Mike’s soft spoken girlfriend, El, giggled from behind a hefty book. It made them all chuckle, but something about it gave Lucas pause.

There was no way it could be a mermaid, obviously, but it felt strange enough to be something that... impossible.

As the months rolled on, the situation only grew stranger. Lucas had been sitting on the edge of the dock, feet swaying in the water, when he dropped the bottle cap from his soda, and it fell through a hole in the planks. He found it sitting on the dock the next day. He had nearly fallen over backwards when he saw it. Sitting there, bits of dried sand crusted in its ridges.

So he started asking for things, outrageous requests.

“Bring me a purple clam shell” And it would come.

“Bring me three pink shells with golden stripes.” He came back the next day to four.

“Bring me a pearl, a bottle cap, some blue sea glass, and a damn explanation of what the hell is happening.” This last came after he felt he was surely losing his mind, and it was nearing the end of summer.

He came back the following day with no intention of surfing. He was going to sit on the end of that dock all damn night if he had to, he was going to get his explanation. Sure enough, he found a clam shell with a small misshapen pearl inside, as well as two bottle caps, a dozen pieces of blue sea glass, a hemp bracelet, and a sharks tooth. He sighed, shook his head, and sat cross legged next to the treasures.

He waited.

And waited, and waited, and waited. He ate the lunch he packed, he read some old comics he had stolen from Dustin's room, he stacked rocks, he counted birds. The sun began to set, and still no sign from whatever person, or thing, was playing this horrible prank on him.

Finally, the last drop of golden sunlight dipped below the horizon, and he knew his bluff had been called. He was tired, and irritated, and he just wanted to go home.

'Maybe this is the reason no one comes to Mayfield cove.' He thought, standing up and collecting his things. *'Because it's cursed, or haunted, or both.'*

He threw his backpack over his shoulder and set off back down the dock, and he was almost at the end where the sand covered most of the planks, when he heard a sound that made his heart stop.

A splash.

Not the kind that it made when something fall *into* water, but the kind that is made when someone surfaces. He heard himself gasp and whirled around so fast that it made him a little dizzy. Even still, there was no mistaking what he saw on the edge of the dock.

A girl. A girl with long orange hair the color of the California Sunset, and freckled skin that shone pale in the moonlight. Her features were soft and sun kissed, and she looked back at him with playful and piercing blue eyes. She smirked at him, and then opened her clasped hands, and dropped dozens of small shells onto the dock.

He tried to open his mouth to speak, but only a small gasping sounds came out. She giggled at him, and turned around, still floating impossibly in the deep water. He walked slowly towards the edge, and then began running when he saw her get ready to plunge back into the sea. But he stopped dead in his tracks when what flickered up over the inky blue surface wasn't a pair of legs, but a tail. A shimmering, minty green, fishes tail.

He must have stayed there waiting on the dock, mouth hanging open, for another half hour before he finally collected himself enough to go home. It had to be a hallucination. Maybe his sandwich had gone bad and he had food poisoning. Maybe he had fallen asleep from boredom there on the docks edge and it had all been a dream. He wanted all of these things to be true, but he knew that they weren't.

He had seen a real life mermaid.

He thanked his lucky stars that all of his friends were asleep when he got home that night. If they had seen him, they probably would have thought he had seen a ghost with how shaky and out of his mind he felt. But it hadn't been a ghost, it had been a damn fish-person. Half of him vowed to never go back to Mayfield Cove, to forget it had ever happened and continue living in a world where mermaids and magic were not real. But the other half, the stronger half, told him he *had* to go back.

So he did.

He woke up the next morning at sunrise, and packed another lunch, and stole more comics. He was going to go down there and wait every day until he had proof that either what he had seen was real, or fake. He wasn't sure which outcome he wanted to be true.

He waited on the dock until a little after noon, and then he decided that sitting here any longer, next to the new shell collection, was going to make him lose his mind. He walked back up to his car and grabbed his surfboard. The swells were not ideal today, but he wasn't planning on surfing.

He paddled out to the middle of the cove, and just sat. shifting his balance, feet cross legged, eye searching. The sun beat down on his head, and then as it moved through the sky, on his shoulders, and on his back. He waited and waited and waited, and it finally paid off.

He heard the flicker of something surfacing behind him, and turned around, losing his balance, and fell forwards into the water. There was a brief moment of panic, and of turning around in the water before he saw what had startled him in the first place.

Floating in the water, less than ten feet from him, was the mermaid from before. Her hair billowed up and around her head, brighter orange than it had looked the night before. She smirked at him still, and if she had had legs, she would have been only a little shorter than he was. He felt his lungs restrict, so he kicked up and surfaced with a gasp. He grappled for his board, and clung to it. A moment later she surfaced too, closer this time.

She gingerly placed a hand on the other side of his board, only inches from his own fingers. He must have looked like an idiot, because she giggled at him again. And although everything about this moment should have terrified him, he found himself enjoying the sound.

“You- you’re- you’re a,” Lucas whispered hoarsely. She raised an eyebrow. “You can’t be real.”

“I’m pretty sure i’m real.” She chuckled at him, and flicked her tail up over the water. He could see now in the sunlight that the vibrant mint colored scales also reflected a pale peach color. It was both mistifying and ridiculous. His brain took longer than it should have to process everything, but he was certain that she was *joking* with him. A mermaid, a mythical creature from Disney movies and fairy

tales, was being sarcastic with *him*.

“But you- you-” He stumbled again, entranced with the way her tail fin swayed back and forth.

“Have a tail? Yeah I know. You said you wanted an answer, so, here ya go.” She gestured towards herself like a gameshow assistant showing off a prize trip to Hawaii. She smiled, and it was genuine and so completely casual that it made Lucas smile too. Surely he had crossed the border into crazy town, but hey, maybe losing his mind wasn't the worst thing in the world.

“So you leave the shells?” Lucas gripped at his board a bit more comfortably now, relaxing his tense muscles. She nodded and gave an ‘mhm’ in reply. “And you listened and brought all of the things I asked for?” She nodded again. “But... why?”

She blinked at him, as if she hadn't considered the answer to this question either, and then the faintest blush crept across her face. Then, with a small twist, she was diving back into the water. Lucas heard himself yelling for her to wait, and it was immediately followed by her reemerging behind him.

“Come sit on the dock, you're going to drown if you keep treading water like that.” And then she dove in again, as elegant as a dolphin.

‘*Or a mermaid.*’ He thought to himself before swimming, board in hand, back to the dock.

She was there waiting for him, propped up on an old and mostly submerged piling that only surfaced when the tide recedes. She patted the dock, gesturing for him to sit next to her, and he couldn't help but obliged. Never for a moment looking away from her perfectly welcoming smile, or her shimmering green tail.

“So, what’s your name surfer boy?”

“Its um, Lucas.” The words stumbled out, as if he had forgotten his name entirely. If talking to pretty girls made him sweat, then talking to pretty *magical* girls made him feel like he was going to have a stroke.

“Lucas.” She repeated, as if weighing the name, checking it to see if she approved or not. “Well, Lucas, my name is Max. Max Mayfield.”

“So this is like... your cove?” He gulped, feeling more and more like trespasser. There was also something almost comical about the fact that her name was something as simple as ‘Max’.

“I guess,” Max sighed. “It was named after my grandfather I think. Then it was just my dad and I, and now its just me.” Her voice was somber, but her face was no less playful.

“Are you... I mean um... Are there others like you?”

“Probably somewhere, the ocean is a big place, but I don't go very far from here so...” She turned away from him, staring into what would

soon be the sunset, hiding behind her vibrant hair.

It all made Lucas feel dizzy. Like he had stepped into one of the worlds greatest secrets, because he kind of had. But it was also so... real. As if she were just some beautiful girl at the beach, and he was just some surfer. It felt so strangely normal.

And suddenly he wanted to know everything about her.

They talked until well after the sun went down. She told him all about the elaborate underwater cave system that was hidden under the cove. About her life, that she collected strange and fascinating items from the sea floor. That she sometimes swam underneath the docks and the floors of beachfront restaurants, to listen to people talk. That she was mesmerized by the girls who skateboarded up and down the sidewalks and piers.

Max made Lucas laugh, a lot. He told her about his friends. About how and why he moved here from a place that didn't have any oceans near it. He told her all about his family and his job, and the reason he was so excited to have found this cove. By the time the sky had turned an inky blue, and the cool breeze made him shiver, they were chatting like old friends. And not what they really were, a dorky boy from Landlocked Indiana, talking to a beautiful and previously believed mythical creature.

"You should probably be going home soon right? It's getting cold." She finally said after his teeth started chattering.

"Yeah probably," Lucas frowned. "Will I be able to see you

tomorrow?”

She smiled at him fondly, and even in the paleness of the moonlight he could see pink staining her skin. “I’d like that, Lucas. I like talking with you.”

“I like talking with you too, Max.” Now he could feel heat behind his own cheeks.

She turned to leap back into the water, and he clambered to his feet, and then something dawned on him.

“Hey wait!” He called just as she dove under, she resurfaced a moment later and turned to him. “You never told me why you left me all of that stuff.”

Max chewed her lip and raised an eyebrow, a passable smirk hiding her nerves. “I left you the shells and all of the other things because... I guess I didn’t know how to get your attention and I... They reminded me of you.”

“They reminded you of me?” His lips quirked up in a somewhat stunned smile.

“Yeah... you know, interesting and pretty.” Max’s confidence almost made it sound like a joke, but her eyes were honest.

Lucas opened his mouth to speak, but he couldn't find any words. So he chuckled and kicked at the dock like a bashful schoolgirl, complete with butterflies.

“Don't let it go to your head, surfer boy.” She rolled her eyes. Lucas couldn't do much in reply but shrug and smile so wide his face hurt. Then Max dove back into the water, her tail flicking out into the moonlight, reflecting deep greens and blues.

Lucas stayed and watched the water for a few more minutes, unsure about everything that had just happened to him. And as he finally walked back to his car he was certain of a few things. The first being that Mermaids were real. The second being that not only had he met one, but that in the short time he had known her, she had become a friend to him. The third, the one that made him blush as he drove home, he thought that just maybe he had a crush on Max Mayfield.

And the last being that tomorrow couldn't come soon enough.